

Message Text

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TAGS: SREF, AORG (UNHCR), VS, LA

SUBJECT: UNHCR ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN LAOS AND VIETNAM

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF SEPTEMBER 18 PRESS RELEASE CONCERNING UNHCR'S \$12 MILLION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR LAOS AND VIETNAM: QUOTE:

THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN, ANNOUNCED TODAY THAT HIS OFFICE WILL SHORTLY BE EMBARKING ON A PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE IN THE REHABILITATION OF UP-ROOTED AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN LAOS AND VIETNAM. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROGRAM COVERING 1974-75 IS ESTIMATED TO COST \$12,000,000. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER HAS APPROACHED POTENTIAL DONOR GOVERNMENTS TO GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO HIS PROPOSED PROGRAM.

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER HAS INITIATED THIS PROGRAM WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, KURT WALDHEIM, UPON RECEIVING SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, AND THE AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF THE REPLBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM. IN AGREEING TO UNDERTAKE THIS PROGRAM, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER HAS BEEN GUIDED BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S VIEW THAT UNITED NATIONS

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ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL SIDES IN INDOCHINA. ALL

REQUESTING PARTIES RECOGNIZE THE ESSENTIAL HUMANITARIAN NATURE OF UNHCR'S HELP.

THE PROGRAM IN VIETNAM AND LAOS IS BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON THE BASIS OF HIS "GOOD OFFICES" FUNCTION, AS DEFINED IN THE PERTINENT RESOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT IN RECENT YEARS, UNHCR HAS BEEN CALLED UPON IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD TO COME TO THE ASSISTANCE OF DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES IN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS CALLED "ESSENTIAL HUMANITARIAN ACTIONS".

THE PRESENT PROGRAM IS SUBSTANTIATED BY MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AND WELL-DEFINED PROJECTS, DRAWN UP IN CONSULTATION WITH THE REQUESTING PARTIES FOLLOWING VISITS TO THE AREA BY UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES. DURING THE VISITS, WHICH TOOK PLACE EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES WERE ABLE TO MAKE AN ON THE SPOT ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES INVOLVED AND ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION WITH THE REQUESTING PARTIES.

ALTHOUGH CONSIDERABLE BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ASSISTANCE IS PRESENTLY BEING GIVEN, THE NEEDS THAT REMAIN UNMET, PARTICULARLY IN THE REHABILITATION OF THE DISPLACED POPULATION, FAR EXCEED THE RESOURCES NOW AVAILABLE. IN THE LIGHT OF THIS, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER BELIEVES THAT UNHCR, IN KEEPING WITH ITS TRADITIONAL HUMANITARIAN ROLE, CAN MAKE A MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION IN THE AREA THROUGH A PROPERLY PLANNED PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE. TO AVOID ANY DUPLICATION OF EFFORT, HOWEVER, CLOSE COORDINATION IS TO BE MAINTAINED WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL AID AGENCIES WORKING IN THE AREA.

IN LAOS, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENT OF FEBRUARY 1973 AND PROTOCOL OF SEPTEMBER 1973, UNHCR ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED FOR THOSE WHO HAD TO LEAVE THEIR VILLAGES AND TRADITIONAL FARMING AREAS DURING THE YEARS OF CONFLICT BUT WHO REMAINED WITHIN THE SAME ZONE OF CONTROL AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAD TO LEAVE AT THE TIME ONE ZONE OF CONTROL FOR ANOTHER BUT WHO NOW FIND THEMSELVES CUT OFF FROM THEIR ANCESTRAL VILLAGES. IN BOTH CASES, THE ASSISTANCE TO BE PROVIDED BY UNHCR WILL BE FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGING, AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE, THE NORMALIZATION OF LIFE. SUCH ASSISTANCE

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WOULD BE MAINLY CONCERNED WITH ESTABLISHING BASIC COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSTRUCTION AND HOUSEHOLD EQUIPMENT. IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT PROPORTIONAL TO THE TOTAL POPULATION, THE NUMBER OF UP-ROOTED AND DISPLACED PERSONS IS HIGHER IN LAOS THAN IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN INDOCHINA. ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE TOTAL

POPULATION OF THREE MILLION PERSONS IN LAOS IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE BECOME UP-ROOTED OR DISPLACED.

IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM UNHCR HAS BEEN REQUESTED TO PROVIDE, WITHIN THE "FRAMEWORK OF REHABILITATION EFFORTS/CURRENTLY

UNDER WAY, ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELDS OF AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY; COTTON AND WOOLEN YARN FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF ESSENTIAL CLOTHING FOR NEEDY UP-ROOTED AND DISPLACED PERSONS; AND CERTAIN PHARMACEUTICAL ITEMS.

IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, UNHCR WILL DIRECT ITS ASSISTANCE TOWARD THE SETTLEMENT, IN THE RURAL AREAS, OF DISPLACED AND UP-

ROOTED PERSONS, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF WHOM HAVE BEEN LIVING IN CAMPS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO RESETTLE THE CAMP POPULATION IN THE RURAL AREAS, UNHCR WILL MEET THE COSTS OF SPECIFIC COMPONENTS OF THE REHABILITATION PROGRAM THAT ARE NOT MET FROM OTHER SOURCES. THIS INCLUDES ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELD OF AGRICULTURE AND THE PROVISION, IN THE RURAL SETTLEMENTS, OF SUCH COMMUNAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS MAY BE REQUIRED TO ENCOURAGE SELF-HELP AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

IN THE AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT, IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE RETURN TO NORMAL LIFE OF THE DISPLACED AND UP-ROOTED POPULATION, UNHCR HAS BEEN REQUESTED TO ASSIST IN THE FIELDS OF AGRICULTURE AND RELATED TRAINING AS WELL AS HOUSING. UNHCR WILL PROVIDE MACHINERY SUCH AS TRACTORS/BULLDOZERS FOR LAND CLEARANCE AND PREPARATION AND WILL CONTRIBUTE TOWARD A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR FARMER-TRAINEES, IN MECHANIZED AGRICULTURE. UNHCR WILL ALSO HELP TO ALLEVIATE THE WIDE-SPREAD SHORTAGE OF HOUSING BY PROVIDING A WORKSHOP FOR CONSTRUCTION OF PREFABRICATED PANELS. UNQUOTE.

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2. UNHCR INFORMS THAT TO DATE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE PLEDGED SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNHCR FOR THIS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, NAMELY

FINLAND	\$53,300
NEW ZEALAND	500,000 NEW ZEALAND DOLLARS
	(710,000 US DOLLARS) DALE

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